

5 Minutes of your time

Roger Slater

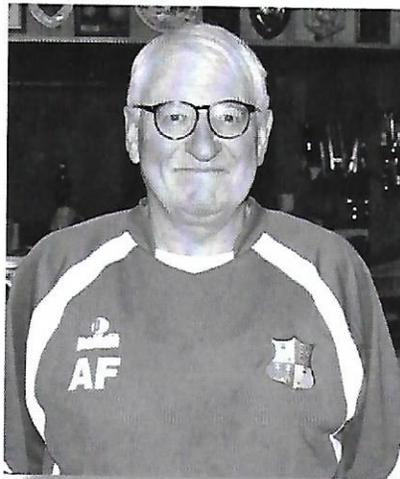
Five minutes of your time, please – with Alan Fogarty

Five Minutes of Your Time is a series of interviews with people from different areas and eras within the game. This one features Alan Fogarty, former Wealdstone FC Manager who worked with Dave Bassett at Wimbledon, Watford and Sheffield United during a 35 year career in the pro game.

What was your background and how did you get involved at Wealdstone FC?

I played semi-pro in the West Midlands League. It was quite a big league in those days and there were only really five or six clubs 'above us' in the Southern League. Then, I ended up at AP Leamington. Geoff Coleman was the Manager there and he went to Nuneaton to run the Reserves. David Pleat was the Manager but he got the sack after a few months, Geoff moved up – and I moved up with him. Then we both got head-hunted by David Martle who was Chairman at Wealdstone – it really was a deal we could not refuse.

Geoff was a teacher at Jaguar training apprentices but we were getting home at 3am midweek with him starting work again at 7. It became too



much for him so he packed up and I took over and I used to go down to the club three times a week with training and matches. It was hard because I was still working in Insurance, but that meant I had two salaries as well so I was comparatively rich!

I knew Howard Kendall from my time at Birmingham and he also played cricket with me, then he offered me a job at Blackburn running the youth team when he took over but I had to tell him I couldn't afford to take the drop in money. I was on about £600 per week with both jobs and he was offering about £250 to go full time!

Maybe that's one regret.

I wonder what would have happened if I had taken that job. I like to think I might have become his Assistant and who knows, I may have stayed with him, but I had a family and the money was important at the time.

You were in charge for the famous FA Cup run and the 3rd Round match at QPR. What was that like at the time?

As you can imagine it was very exciting and busy! The run was good with all the wins and then the press coverage around the latter ties. There were articles about me and some of the players, all the hangers-on appeared too – people I'd never heard of from Showbiz and all that. Everyone wanted to know us!

We were a good team playing good football, and we really believed we could beat both Reading and Hereford. We went to Reading and won that but we drew at home to Hereford – for the replay I said to the team "they don't know we can play football yet. We did nothing at home. Settle down and play and we'll beat them". We hung on a bit at the end – we'd gone to a sweeper system and it was a bit

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backs to the wall, but we won and we deserved it.

Going to QPR was big time. None of us had ever gone that far or probably even dreamt of it. They were in the first division with Internationals – household names in their side. We weren't very good on the day, we froze I think and they got an early goal.

George Duck never really got a kick and if anyone was going to win the game for us it would have been him. He had an early chance – probably his only one of the game....

It was a great experience – I remember the Chief Constable pulling me to one side before the game, and he said "this is what happens if there is an emergency – if there is an explosion at the ground, this is what you have to do..." It was a bit different to Wealdstone that's for sure! The other thing I remember vividly is how kind Alex Stock (QPR Manager) was after the game; he really looked after us and made sure we had everything we needed. He didn't have to do that but he really took care of us.

The league results took a bit of a dip during the cup run then picked up afterwards – were you conscious of that – was it the knock on effect of the cup run?

To be honest, I don't know – I actually don't remember, but it would be only natural for non-league lads to have a run like that – its fairytale stuff, so I suppose it must have been on their minds all the time, beating two league sides then going off to play one of the top teams in the country! I bet I wasn't very



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happy about it though.

You see it a lot, even with top players – bloody Fashanu for example – he would pick his games. A big cup tie coming up and he'd be careful and thinking about that, not getting injured or whatever....Harry hated it. (More of that later – Ed). Those Wimbledon lads were so honest in the main, it was a big part of the success..

You introduced Stuart Pearce to the side...

I still see him. I looked after him a bit – there were a couple of clubs making enquiries quite early on in his career, but he said he wanted to stay at Wealdstone until he'd finished his

apprenticeship which he did. I'd moved on when his transfer to Coventry went through but he was in digs in a hotel near where my insurance business was based. He came up on his own and had hardly been out of London before, so, as I was only a ten minute walk away I used to pop in and see him and we've

been friends ever since. His wife also used to look after some horses for a couple of Boxing trainers - the Lynch brothers – when they had a house at the bottom of my road and Stuart and his wife used to come over to look after them and pop in then

too....

When he arrived at Wealdstone he was so naive! I went to see the Reserves one night and he was playing and I hadn't really seen him before (though I did used to get to watch the Reserves quite often). I spoke to the manager and asked what he thought. I reckoned he was a bit better than Reserve team at least. I took him to Dorchester to freshen things up a bit in the side and I noticed in the dressing room that he was mimicking what the other lads did; Vaseline on the eyebrows, tie-ups round the shin pads, all of that, but then when he played he was fantastic, I didn't have to tell him positional play or anything, he just had it

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all – a natural at 16 if a bit raw.

I used to get the team in for set-pieces on a Saturday at home. With him being left footed I got him to take a few free kicks, curling them into the box behind the back four and I told him – just once – where I wanted the ball. The bloody kicks were perfect. No one else in the side could do that. He was tough too – no quarter asked or given! Not everyone thought he was good enough but I always thought he had it. Fast and tough, I thought he may end up at centre half, but that didn't really happen till the end of his career.

Why did you leave Wealdstone?

My contract was running out and a new Chairman came in – Morrill I think – and he made it quite obvious that he didn't want me there though I don't know why. I assume he had his own man in mind. I put out a few feelers and Tamworth offered me a job. It was a hell of a contract and they were going to have a new ground – they sold me the whole shebang... so off I went.

It was a shame, but I never did find out why Wealdstone didn't want me to stay! I doubt they'd say even if I asked though, they were a bit shifty. I remember the money that used to come in, in holdalls and bags... I never knew what was happening.

Later in your career you also worked closely with Dave Bassett at a number of clubs. How did that relationship develop?

Through coaching actually. More accurately through the FA. They used to run coaching courses at Lilleshall and such like at the end of the season for all the League coaches – Harry and I seemed to always get invited and we were the only two Managers from the Non-league game so we'd share a room and we became mates from that.

I was at Nuneaton when he was at Wimbledon and we finished Runner Up twice to them so there was a connection there too. He was at Wimbledon when Dario Gradi left and got promoted to manager, then I got a phone call and he offered me the job as a Scout in the Midlands and North, mainly watching their next opponents – Harry was big on that.

I used to go down to Wimbledon a lot and once the lads found out I didn't mind a drink, they took me in as well. I wasn't much older than them and it was all part of the good spirit around the place. Wally Downes took a bit of a shine to me and showed me the sights as you can imagine. He's got about the best football brain of anyone I know – perhaps except Don Howe - but it kept us all close and when Harry moved on I went too, to Watford and Sheffield United.

It was bloody hair-raising at Wimbledon sometimes, all good fun with some serious football knowledge being imparted as well. We had 23 players there who came through the Youth

system and played in the Premier Division, mainly with Wimbledon, some with other clubs. That's a hell of a record for any club. Wimbledon weren't 'industrial' – they could play. We never used to think of it as industrial football, we called it winning.

Most of what went on off the field you couldn't print! The leaders were Downsie, Alan Cork, Harry, Laurie Sanchez even, but he was the straight man – he used to keep things under control a bit, but they showed me a lot of respect and it was good times.

What do you look for in an opposing team when you are scouting?

Well, then, it was the obvious things, watching the shape, set-pieces and how they set themselves up. Were they a physical side, did they try and intimidate opponents, that sort of thing. Strengths and weaknesses really. In those days every club had someone like me to do the scouting but nowadays, it's an agency thing. These guys go out and watch teams as a business and then everyone can get the reports...

You also worked with Don Howe and Lawrie Sanchez as Managers; Do different managers want different things?

I also worked for David Moyes and Gary Peters at Preston as well. They want basically the same, the information that will help them win, but it's a simple

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game and you need to know how different teams and managers set themselves out and some are more thorough than others.

Don Howe was older than me and we used to look up to his generation, Don, Bobby Robson, Malcolm Allison, Dave Sexton and the like; he was the best of the bunch and to work with him was fantastic. I could just sit there and be chatting with him and then the phone would go and he'd take a call from the National Coach in Uruguay or somewhere – he was such a respected world figure in the game. Twenty years as England Coach speaks for itself and he was always so bright and chirpy – not the dour figure many remember.

How do you think the game as a whole has changed over your career?

Over thirty five years I had in the game! The biggest change is the physical side, I played when the game was much more physical but players are protected a lot more these days – you won't get an opponent going through you and getting away with it like you used to.

Also, the style changed. Teams like Wimbledon started to play a bit more directly and that surprised a lot of people, but these days, teams adapt better to their opposition and some pick certain players for certain games, not just on rotation but to combat what their opponents might do. Managers have become cleverer – some follow a success-

ful pattern, some try and combat it. Ron Saunders' teams we could never beat at Wimbledon for example. They were as tough as us so we couldn't intimidate them and they stopped us playing.

Finally, the biggest change is the money. I remember when I was a kid I used to go to Villa in the afternoon and if I was in town, I'd go on the bus. It wasn't



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unusual for the directors or one or two players to be on the same bus – that's just the way it was, they couldn't even afford cars in those days, but the times have changed now!

What now?

Well, I was working with my son at Southam United. We'd won the Coventry Telegraph Cup and last year finished Runner Up in the Midland Combination Premier League. There were three of us in the Management team – Luke (my son) and I and our coach who fell out with the Chairman after a bit of a verbal outburst. At the end of last

season he got the sack and Luke and I were looking for another coach, but the guy that left went off to another local side and took about five players with him.

Barry Shearsby, the new coach, brought in some of his players but we lost three matches on the bounce, and not the way we'd like to play either. For me, these players just weren't good enough but I thought we could take on the fight and get them up to the level we needed, but Luke felt not and decided after the third game to resign. I went too - I wasn't going to go back into management at this time of life! I'm sure he'll join someone else, and if he wants, I'll help out – as a sort of mentor – if that's what he wants. With all that experience, I'm there if he feels he needs it.

Otherwise, I'll be at the Villa – I've still got my season ticket, but it's not just about them, it's all the teams in the Premier League and some of the players – they're world class and a pleasure to watch...

Five Minutes of Your Time is one of a number of articles produced for the blog at www.2ndyellow.com where there is a regular column on Wealdstone.

**Pics - Roger Slater
Graham Smith**